

# Diocese of Victoria Pastoral Care Training Program: Fall 2026 Series

## THE NINE PASTORAL CARE SESSIONS

to be held via Zoom

September 26 – November 28, 2026, 9:30 am – noon

(No session on October 10)

The Diocese of Victoria Pastoral Care Training Program, offered free and online, balances practical application with active participation and reflection. Learn skills that help to build trust and respect – whether you are a current visitor or interested in this ministry, caring for family members, or just considering these sessions as a personal undertaking. Each session has facilitator-led segments, video footage, prayer and music/hymns, weekly material support, and an opportunity for participants to share with each other. This spiritual program, rooted in Christ, helps participants deepen their faith.

*“The sessions were guided with such depth, compassion, and steadiness. Facilitation created such a space where learning felt safe and deeply meaningful. I’m leaving with the conviction that Jesus loves us and that we can bring him and His love to others in the most compassionate way.”* – Winter 2026 Series graduate

### Session 1 – Basics of Pastoral Care – September 26

This session will help you understand more about the basics of Pastoral Care, how this act of love and compassion relates to social justice, and how it serves as an inroad to the hearts and lives of others. You will learn about foundational teachings for the ministry of pastoral care in our parish communities, rooted in the teachings and example of Jesus. The term “lay pastoral care visitor” and a few general concepts will be discussed, along with examples of this critical ministry, and the required pathway to join this ministry if this is your choice.

### Session 2 – The Healing Ministry of October 3

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a reminder that practical compassion for those in need is at the heart of the Christian mission (Luke 10:30 – 37). When we visit the lonely, the sick, the elderly and the dying – in their homes, hospitals, and long-term care facilities - we are living out our baptismal identity nurtured by the love of Christ. *The Healing Ministry of Christ* seeks to bring people to wholeness in Christ out of a place of brokenness and despair. You will learn how both as individuals and as a community you are empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to Christ’s mission and presence as compassionate agents of healing and reconciliation.

***NO SESSION OCTOBER 10***

### Session 3 – Active and Compassionate Living – October 17

Active and compassionate listening is one of the most important skills we can have. You can help to create opportunities where compassion and care can flourish. Pope Francis highlighted the importance of listening, saying it is the *“fundamental attitude of every person who wants to do something for others”*. How do you want to grow in active, compassionate and spiritual listening to better connect with our sisters and brothers in Christ?

#### **Session 4 – Elderly Isolation, Loneliness and the Journey with Dementia – October 24**

Social isolation and loneliness are serious yet underappreciated public health risks that affect a significant portion of the older adult population. Dementia is one of the most important issues we face as our population ages. One of our presenters will teach us about the inherent value and dignity of human life beyond the diagnosis.

#### **Session 5 – Palliative Care and the Healing Ministry for the Dying – October 31**

Death is a universal human experience. *“In order to live eternally, we do not need to cheat death, but to serve life, by caring for others in this, our time together.”* – Pope Leo XVI, July 13, 2025. You will hear about the experience of dying and the unique aspects of palliative care. Some vignettes of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops’ *Horizons of Hope – A toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care* will be shown to help address serious and ongoing questions surrounding palliative care, dying, suffering, accompaniment, and bereavement, as well as learning about the personal exchange of gifts at the earthly end of life before a loved one passes on to eternal life.

#### **Session 6 – The Grieving Process – November 7**

Experiencing grief is a normal part of living, in our personal growth and in the way we grow in our faith. This session will identify the stages, myths, and facts of grief while exploring personal experiences with grief and loss. Understanding the grieving process is important to recognize grief in self and others. This session helps to identify and enhance grief coping skills and strategies for healing.

#### **Session 7 – Bereavement: Ministering to Families – November 14**

Participants will experience storytelling from a former hospital Coordinator of Pastoral/Spiritual Care and learn ways to help others such as children and teens relate to how they can grieve. Some knowledge will be gleaned on how to connect and cope with one’s emotions. The concept that family members grieve in individual ways based on age, stage of life and experience with earthly dying and death will be explored. A focus is also made on a forgotten area - loss of siblings - through reflection and discussion what emotional hurdles a surviving sibling might possibly experience.

#### **Session 8 – Ministry of God’s Presence and Compassion – November 21**

Visiting the elderly, the homebound/shut-ins, the lonely, the grieving, the sick, and the dying reminds us that we have been called by God to be servants to those in need. Learn about visiting tools and tips for those sacred moments spent when accompanying parishioners and family member just as God is ‘with us’ in Jesus Christ (Immanuel — Matthew 1:23). Ways in which the Church’s values can be practiced in parish pastoral care ministry work and when caring for family members and other loved ones will be explored. Lay pastoral care visitors can assist their pastors by helping to share Christ’s healing love and compassion. We nourish the person we are visiting, in their rawness and vulnerability, via a relationship with God through Pastoral Care: by offering trust, friendship, accompaniment, the ministry of presence, prayer, and Communion. There will also be a demonstration of Holy Communion when visiting.

#### **Session 9 – Spouse Caregiving, and Healthy Boundaries & Self-Care – November 28**

Sacrifices are significant in caring for a spouse. Benefits of self-care as a spouse caregiver, as a parish pastoral care visitor, and as a family member will be covered, including an understanding of healthy boundaries as part of self-care. Participants learn how to step forward to not just survive but thrive. Even Jesus “often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16). God cares about our well-being. The focus is God centred self-care.

*Participants who complete all sessions will receive a Certificate of Completion.*